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Friday August 4, 2006

## State audit of Casey cattle program questioned

By **BRENDA S. EDWARDS**  
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LIBERTY - Jim Young, who represents the Casey County Cattlemen's Association in administrating state cattle programs, did not get any answers Thursday night about an audit being done on his bookkeeping.

He spoke to the Casey County Agricultural Development Council about the problems after he learned that funds for farm programs in Casey are being frozen this year until an audit is complete on the cattle handling facilities program funded by the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy.

He questioned two state program analysts as to why his figures were being questioned, but got no answers.

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"I've been doing what we're required to do on applicants in the cattle programs," said Young. "Why pick on us?" he asked. "We've served this county very well, we don't deserve this."

He was told by analysts Nick Hoover and Todd Harp that only Keith Rogers, executive director of the state program, can answer the questions.

Young said he has about 125 farmers on the waiting list for cattle programs. He has paid \$575,000 to 183 applicants and has about \$36,000 to be spent for 2005. He turned \$125,000 back to the state because people did not want to participate in the genetics program. The money will go back into Casey's fund and be reallocated.

### Applied for \$472,000 this year


Young said the county has applied for \$472,000 this year, but the funds are being held until an audit is done.

The analysts also talked about the programs the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy offers to farmers who want to be more diverse since the tobacco cutbacks.


Farmers who wish to participate in the forage, fencing, beef cattle, goats and other programs make applications which are reviewed by the local sponsor, then forwarded to the state for approval. Most of the programs run in a 12-month cycle, said Hoover.

He said labor can be used as part of the farmer's contribution to the 50-50 matching grant, whereas in the past, the farmer paid half the cost of the program.

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"If a producer wants to get a \$5,000 cost-share fencing program, he can turn in up to \$2,500 in labor and costs," said Hoover. He said the fencing program runs 18 months and is for boundary fencing only; no planks are allowed. The forestry program can be interior fencing, he said.

He also said labor reimbursement is allowed in all programs up to \$16 per hour. "Farmers won't get the money, but it will go toward the cost-share."

Hoover said when money is not used and is returned to the state, it can be used in other farm programs in the county. If the money is not sent back until the end of the year, it does not help for that year; it can be used the following year.

### Forage program seeking \$172,225

Casey County got \$172,225 for its forage program last year, said Pat Williams of the Soil Conservation District office, which is the administrator. He asked for the same amount for this year.

Joyce Cardenas, who works with the goat programs in Marion, Casey and other counties, said Casey has spent \$73,749 in 2005 projects.

"I'd like to see more money put into the program since it now includes sheep," she said. Each farmer can get up to \$15,000.

She said the state has begun to require before and after photographs of their building projects in the sheep and goat program. Casey had 32 goat programs funded last year.

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